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DAWN

Thursday
January 1, 2026
Rajab 11, 1447

KARACHI

Rs 35.00
18 Pages
Vol. LXXX No. 1
Regd. No. SS-022

www.dawn.com

Rules tweaked to use facial, iris scans as ID biometrics

- Nadra will start issuing new verification certificates from Jan 20 at all registration centres
- Move aimed at changing existing regime by enabling contactless system, resolving issues faced by citizens with faded fingerprints
- Technology widely used in United States and European countries

By Iftikhar A. Khan

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has amended the National Identity Card Rules, expanding the definition of biometrics to legally recognise facial and iris scans as valid identifiers besides fingerprints, the National Database and Registration Authority (Nadra) said on Wednesday.

The amendment, made on Nadra's recommendation, changes the country's biometric regime by enabling contactless fingerprint and facial recognition-based biometric verification.

From Jan 20, 2026, Nadra will start issuing facial recognition-based biometric verification certificates at all registration centres for citizens whose fingerprint-based verification is not possible.

Where any institution requires such verification, citizens will be able to obtain the certificate from any Nadra registration centre after paying a nominal fee of Rs20.

New tech

Biometric verification at banks, telecom companies and government offices has so far relied almost entirely on fingerprint matching.

When fingerprint verification fails, services are usually blocked, forcing citizens to make repeated visits to service providers or Nadra registration centres, often without any other way to prove their identity.

The new system changes this by allowing alternative and legally recognised biometric methods.

If fingerprint verification fails or cannot be performed, institutions will now be able to use facial or iris-based verification issued and confirmed by Nadra, so services and transactions can continue without delay.

Facial recognition confirms identity by matching a person's facial features with photographs already stored in Nadra's database. Iris recognition works by checking the unique patterns in a person's eyes, which do not change over time. Both methods are contactless and are less affected by age, type of work or minor injuries.

These technologies are commonly used in Western countries. In the United States and Europe, facial recognition is widely used at airports, for e-passports, digital banking sign-ups and pension checks.

In a statement, the authority

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DHAKA: National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq shakes hands with Indian External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar on Wednesday, ahead of the funeral of former Bangladeshi prime minister Khaleda Zia.—White Star

Indian proxies disrupting peace in Balochistan: CDF

- Army chief Munir warns 'hostile designs' will be foiled 'through firm action'
- Says Pakistan 'committed to regional peace' but will 'defend' territorial integrity

By Our Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Army chief and Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) Field Marshal Asim Munir on Wednesday warned India over its continued involvement in fomenting unrest in Balochistan, saying that any direct or indirect threat to the Pakistan's territorial integrity would be met with a stern and decisive response.

Addressing the participants of the 18th National Workshop on Balochistan at the General Headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi, Field Marshal Munir said Indian-sponsored proxies were actively fuelling violence in the province with the clear intent of destabilising the country and sabotaging its economic progress.

"Indian-sponsored proxies continue to propagate violence and disrupt development in Balochistan," the army chief said, according to an Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) statement.

He reaffirmed that such hostile designs would be thwarted through "firm action" by the security forces to rid the province of terrorism and unrest.

Balochistan continued to witness sustained violence throughout 2025, with at least 252 terrorist attacks claiming 419 lives, according to the Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies database, as the insurgency intensified in scale and sophistication.

The year saw a series of audacious attacks, most notably the March 11 hijacking of the Jaffar Express passenger train.

Other major incidents involved coordinated bombings targeting security convoys and passenger buses, suicide attacks, including the use of female bombers, brief militant takeovers of areas such as Mangochar

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Ayaz Sadiq, Jaishankar shake hands in high-level contact

Dawn Report

KARACHI: National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq and India's External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar shook hands in Dhaka on Wednesday, marking the first high-level contact between Pakistani and Indian officials since the military conflict in May.

According to a press release issued by the National Assembly Secretariat, Mr Sadiq was in Dhaka to attend the funeral of former Bangladeshi prime minister Khaleda Zia when Mr Jaishankar approached him and offered a handshake.

"Indian External Minister Dr S. Jaishankar approached the Speaker of the National Assembly and shook hands," the statement said, adding that Mr Jaishankar introduced himself and said he recognised Mr Sadiq.

Relations between Islamabad and New Delhi reached their lowest point this year after an attack in Pahalgam in India-occupied Kashmir. India blamed Pakistan, which denied any involvement and called for an independent investigation.

The NA Secretariat statement said Pakistan had "consistently emphasised dialogue, restraint and cooperative measures, including proposals for peace talks and joint investigations into the alleged false flag Pahalgam incident, in order to prevent unprovoked aggression and escalation".

Following the attack, India announced a series of unilateral measures

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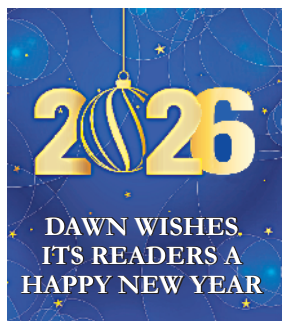

Petrol price slashed by Rs10, diesel rate by Rs8.5

By Kalbe Ali

ISLAMABAD: Petrol and diesel prices have been reduced significantly by Rs10.28 and Rs8.57 per litre, respectively, for the first fortnight of 2026.

Based on the recommendations by the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (Ogra), the government announced that the new price of petrol will be Rs253.17 per litre from January 1 to 15. The decrease will help the individual travellers during the ongoing holidays, mainly in Punjab where the CNG fuel is very limited.

The price of per litre high-speed diesel will be Rs257.08 for this period.

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ON OTHER PAGES

Opp blasts crackdown on Adiala sit-in

After the Punjab police dispersed protesters outside the Adiala jail in the early hours of Wednesday, the opposition alliance, led by the PTI, denounced the use of water cannons against the family members of ex-PM Imran Khan and other party supporters. This is the third time the police have used force to break up the sit-in outside the prison.
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Special Report

DAWN
2025
YEARENDER
THE HARD STATE
Constitutional dissonance, changes within the defence structure, economic 'stability' and two hot borders marked last year's key moments.

Pakistan backs dialogue amid Yemen tensions: FO

- Expresses 'complete solidarity' with Saudi Arabia, reiterates support for 'territorial integrity' of Yemen
- PM Shehbaz discusses regional situation with Saudi crown prince in phone call

Dawn Report

KARACHI: Pakistan on Wednesday voiced "complete solidarity" with Saudi Arabia as violence resurged in Yemen, reaffirming Islamabad's commitment to the kingdom's security while urging restraint and calling for dialogue to prevent further escalation in the region.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif separately discussed the evolving regional situation with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and later received the Saudi ambassador for talks on bilateral ties.

"Pakistan expresses complete solidarity with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and reaffirms its commitment to the security of the Kingdom," the FO said in a statement.

Islamabad also reiterated its support for Yemen's "unity and territorial integrity" and for efforts aimed at achieving "lasting peace and stability" in the country.

"In this regard, Pakistan strongly opposes unilateral steps by any Yemeni party that may further escalate the situation, undermine peace efforts and threaten the peace and stability of Yemen as well as that of the region," it said, adding that Pakistan welcomed regional efforts to de-escalate tensions.

"Pakistan maintains its firm support for the resolution of the Yemen issue through dialogue and diplomacy and hopes that Yemen's people and regional powers work together towards an inclusive and enduring settlement of the issue, safeguarding regional stability," it added.

PM-MBS call

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday held a telephone conversation with Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia Mohammed bin Salman and discussed and exchanged views on the regional situation and current developments.

Expressing Pakistan's complete solidarity with the kingdom, the prime minister said that it was imperative to maintain regional peace and stability through dialogue and diplomacy.

The prime minister also emphasised the need to maintain unity and harmony among the ranks of the Ummah, in the midst of various current challenges, according to a press statement issued by the PM House.

PM Shehbaz conveyed his respects and good wishes to Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and to the crown prince and thanked the Saudi leadership for its warmth towards Pakistan.

Both leaders reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening long-standing ties between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, the statement said.

The crown prince thanked the prime minister for the call and reiterated Saudi Arabia's desire to expand cooperation with Pakistan in areas of mutual interest. He also expressed a desire to undertake an official visit to Pakistan this year, according to the statement.

Saudi envoy calls on PM

Separately, Saudi Ambassador Nawaf bin Saeed Ahmad Al-Malkiy

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LEADERSHIP IN INSURANCE
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